



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

20TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

Mission

The 20th Special Operations Squadron (20th SOS) reactivated Jan. 15, 2010 at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. It operates the CV-22 Osprey aircraft in support of special operations.

The primary mission of the 20th SOS is to conduct day or night low-level penetration into hostile enemy territory, to accomplish infiltration and exfiltration, aerial gunnery support and resupply of special operations forces throughout the world.

Background

The 20th SOS was formed as the 20th Helicopter Squadron (HS) in 1956 to perform traditional helicopter missions with H-21s for the Tactical Air Command. In 1965, the unit's CH-3E helicopters were transferred to Southeast Asia and the squadron began unconventional warfare and special operations as the Pony Express. In 1967, when joined by the UH-1F/P helicopters formerly assigned to Project Lucky Tiger, they became the "Green Hornets." It was on one of these 20th HS missions that Capt. James P. Fleming earned the Medal of Honor for heroism during combat in Vietnam in 1968.



20th Special Operations Squadron

The Green Hornets continued to perform unconventional warfare missions for seven distinguished years, until inactivation of the 20th Helicopter Squadron in 1972. Upon reactivation in 1976 at Hurlburt Field, Fla., the unit mission remained one of unconventional warfare and special operations using UH-1N gunships and CH-3Es. The HH-53H Pave Low replaced the CH-3E in 1980, providing a long range, heavier lift helicopter capability. The crews used the Pave Low avionics to arrive over target on time and undetected, where they performed terminal operations wearing night vision goggles.

In 1983, the UH-1Ns began two years of outstanding support as part of then-Vice President George Bush's South Florida Drug Enforcement Task Force, participating in Operation Bahamas, Antilles and Turks (BAT). The Op BAT Hueys flew hundreds of daring over-water missions from the Bahamas before transferring to Homestead Air Force Base, Fla., in 1985.

In 1986, the Green Hornets flew the specially equipped and highly capable MH-53H Pave Low and started flying the upgraded MH-53J Pave Low III in 1988.

In December 1989, members of the 20th SOS were mobilized as part of a joint task force for

Operation Just Cause, successfully restoring democracy in Panama.

Among the first units to deploy to Operation Desert Shield in August 1990, 20th SOS crew members and aircraft led U.S. Army AH-64 Apaches in the air strike, opening the air war in Operation Desert Storm. A 20th SOS crew rescued Navy Lt. Devon Jones, logging the first successful combat rescue of a downed Airman since the Vietnam War. The crew earned the MacKay Trophy for their accomplishments.

Squadron personnel deployed in support of Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti, providing support to a National Command Authorities resolution. Members of the 20th SOS, participating in operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, went into harm's way in attempting a rescue of two downed French crewmen, receiving two Purple Heart medals and the coveted Cheney Award.

Green Hornet crews were also involved in the search and rescue operations resulting from the CT-43 crash in which Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and his party lost their lives in April 1996 in Croatia. These same crews deployed shortly thereafter to support the American Embassy evacuations in Monrovia, Liberia - airlifting more than 2,000 evacuees to safety. The squadron deployed crews and aircraft to Southwest Asia in support of Central Command and Operation Desert Thunder in February 1998. The Pave Low gave the theater commander a night, all-weather personnel recovery capability, unparalleled in the U.S. inventory.

In 1999, the Pave Low III's were upgraded to the MH-53M Pave Low IV. The M model brought more technology and vastly superior avionics to the mission, furthering the capabilities and resources available to the crews flying the world's most sophisticated helicopter. These new technologies were battle tested during Operation Allied Force when the Green Hornets rescued downed pilots from an F-117 and an F-16, earning two Silver Stars and numerous Distinguished Flying Crosses.

In 2001, terrorism brought great tragedy to our nation and the Green Hornets were quick to respond in the initial recovery efforts at the Pentagon and Ground Zero in New York City supporting Operation Noble Eagle. But our work did not stop there. The 20th rapidly deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, engaging in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan with continuing endeavors into Iraq as the Global War on Terror continues.

The Green Hornets have flown direct assaults on numerous high profile targets and affected the rescue and exfiltration of hundreds of US and allied soldiers. Included among these heroic actions are the daring daylight medevac of 32 injured soldiers in the midst of a battle and the rescue of a downed aircrew deep in hostile territory, which earned the squadron its second MacKay Trophy.

On Oct. 23, 2008, the 20th SOS deactivated at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Lineage

Constituted 20th Observation Squadron (Light) on 5 Feb. 1942; Activated on 2 March 1942; Redesignated 20th Observation Squadron on 4 July 1942; 20th Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter) on 2 April 1943; 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron on 11 Aug. 1943; Inactivated on 27 Nov. 1945; Consolidated (19 Sept. 1985) w/20th Helicopter Squadron, which was constituted on 24 Feb. 1956; Activated on 9 July 1956; Discontinued, and inactivated, on 8 March 1960; Activated on 24 Sept. 1965; Organized on 8 Oct. 1965; Redesignated 20th Special Operations Squadron on 1 Aug. 1968; Inactivated on 1 April 1972; Activated on 1 Jan. 1976.

Assignments

Air Force Combat Command, 2 March 1942; Army Air Forces, 9 March 1942; 76th Observation (later, 76th Reconnaissance; 76th Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 12 March 1942; III

Reconnaissance Command, 23 Aug. 1943; Army Air Forces, India-Burma Sector, 26 Dec. 1943 (attached to 5306th Photographic and Reconnaissance Group [Provisional], 26 Dec. 1943-17 Jan. 1944, and to Tenth Air Force, 17 Jan.-7 March 1944); Tenth Air Force, 7 March 1944 (attached to 5320th Air Defense Wing [Provisional], March-May 1944); 8th Photographic (later, 8th Reconnaissance) Group, 25 April 1944; Army Air Forces, India-Burma Theater, Oct.-27 Nov. 1945; Eighteenth Air Force, 9 July 1956 (attached to 314th Troop Carrier Wing, 9 July 1956-); Ninth Air Force, 1 Sept.. 1957-8 March 1960 (remained attached to 314th Troop Carrier Wing to 16 July 1959; attached to 354th Tactical Fighter Wing, 16 July 1959-8 March 1960); Pacific Air Forces, 24 Sept. 1965; 2d Air Division, 8 Oct. 1965 (attached to 6250th Combat Support Group, c. 10 Dec. 1965-8 March 1966); 14th Air Commando (later, 14th Special Operations) Wing, 8 March 1966; 483rd Tactical Airlift Wing, 1 Sept.. 1971-1 April 1972; 1st Special Operations Wing, 1 Jan. 1976; 1st Special Operations (later, 16th Operations) Group, 22 Sept. 1992-15 Nov. 2006. 1st Special Operations Group, 16 Nov. 2006-23 Oct. 2008; 27th Special Operations Group, 15 Jan. 2010

Stations

Savannah AB, GA, 2 March 1942; Pope Field, NC, 28 March 1942; Vichy AAB, MO; 14 Dec. 1942; Morris Field, NC, 8 May 1943; Key Field, MS, 31 Aug.-8 Nov. 1943; Camp Anza, CA, 11-c. 17 Nov. 1943; Bombay, India, 26 Dec. 1943; Camp Deolali, India, 28 Dec. 1943; Guskhara, India, 5 Jan. 1944 (flight operated from Kisselbari, India, 6-25 March 1944); Kisselbari, India, 26 March 1944 (operated from DinJan., India, 1 May-20 June 1944; detachment at Tingkaw Sakan, Burma, 21 May-20 June 1944; operated from Tingkaw Sakan, Burma, 21 June-c. 10 Nov. 1944; detachment at Myitkyina, Burma, 10 July-c. 25 Aug. 1944); Myitkyina, Burma, c. 9 Nov. 1944 (flight operated from Akyab, Burma, 12 April-22 May 1945); Nagaghuli, India, c. 20 April 1945; Dergaon, India, 6 July 1945; Piardoba, India, Sept.-4 Nov. 1945; Camp Kilmer, N.J., 26-27 Nov. 1945; Sewart AFB, Tenn., 9 July 1956; Myrtle Beach AFB, SC, 16 July 1959-8 March 1960; Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam, 8 Oct. 1965; Nha Trang AB, South Vietnam, 15 June 1966; Tuy Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 5 Sept. 1969; Cam Ranh Bay AB, South Vietnam, 25 Sept.. 1970-1 April 1972; Eglin AF Auxiliary Field No. 9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 1 Jan. 1976- 23 Oct.. 2008; Cannon AFB, .

Aircraft

A-20, DB-7, L-1, L-4, and P-43, 1942-1943; P-40, 1942-1945; L-5, 1942-1945; B-25, 1942-1945; P-51/F-6, 1945; H-21, 1956-1960; CH-3, 1965-1969; UH-1, 1967-1972; UH-1, 1976-1985; CH-3, 1976-1980; MH-53, 1980-2008; CV-22 Osprey, 2010 -

Honors

Service Streamers

World War II

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

India-Burma

Central Burma

China Defensive

Vietnam

Vietnam Defensive

Vietnam Air

Vietnam Air Offensive

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III

Vietnam Air/Ground

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV

TET 69/Counteroffensive
Vietnam Summer-Fall, 1969
Vietnam Winter-Spring, 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Southwest Monsoon
Commando Hunt V
Commando Hunt VI
Commando Hunt VII
Vietnam Ceasefire

Southwest Asia
Defense of Saudi Arabia
Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers
Panama, 1989-1990

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citations
Southeast Asia
8 March 66-7 March 67
21 June 68-30 June 69

Southeast Asia (Army General Order No. 25, June 2001)
1 June 67-31 Aug. 68
1 Nov. 68-31 March 72

Gallant Unit Citation

6 Oct. 01-30 May 03

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

10 Jan.-12 March 66
1 Nov. 66-1 April 67
16 June 67-20 June 68
1 July 67- 30 June 68
1 July 70-30 June 71
1 Sept.. 71-31 Dec. 71
1 May 82-30 April 84
1 June 97-31 May 99
1 July 03-30 June 05
1 Sept.. 06 - 30 June 07

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan. 76-31 March 77
6 Nov. 78-2 March 79
15 July 79-15 May 80
16 May 80-30 April 82
1 May 85-30 April 87
1 May 88-30 April 90
16 April 92-15 April 94
1 June 95-31 May 97
1 July 99-30 June 01
1 July 01-30 June 03
1 Sept.. 04-31 Aug. 06

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses with Palm

1 Jan.-30 Aug. 68

16 June 67-1 April 72

Emblem significance

20th Special Operations Squadron emblem significance: Blue background represents the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The black disc denotes the night sky, which is the theater of operations of special operations units. The band represents the unit's heritage when organized in 1976 in tri-service support of an unconventional warfare mission. The stars reflect the nine primary functions of the unit and the nine aerospace employment principles of war. The red star signifies the unit's participation in Operation J-CATCH. The green hornet symbolizes the hovering capabilities of the rotary wing aircraft that the unit utilizes in a low-level environment. The hornet's "stinger" denotes the gunship weaponry.